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Letter dated 6 May 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith an assessment of the work of the Security Council for the month of October 2015 under the presidency of Spain (see annex). This assessment was prepared under my supervision, after consultation with the other members of the Council.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Román Oyarzun

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Annex to the letter dated 6 May 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English]

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Spain (October 2015)

Introduction

Under the presidency of Spain in October 2015, the Security Council held 20 public meetings and 10 consultations of the whole. During the closed consultations, four additional substantive items were discussed under the item entitled "Other matters".

The Council adopted five resolutions, agreed on three statements by the President and issued five press statements.

Among the public meetings there were three open debates. On 13 October 2015, the Security Council held an open debate at the ministerial level, entitled "High-level review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000): from rhetoric to effective results" chaired by the Prime Minister of Spain, Mariano Rajoy. On 20 October, the Council held an open debate on working methods, and on 22 October, the Council convened its quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, José Manuel García-Margallo.

Africa

The situation in Mali

On 6 October, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mongi Hamdi, briefed the Security Council on the situation in Mali, on the basis of the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/732). He presented an overview on developments in the political, security and humanitarian situation and summarized the actions being taken and efforts made to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. While regretting the delays in the implementation of some provisions of the peace agreement, he stressed that the concerted action of MINUSMA and the international mediation was successful in encouraging the Malian parties to implement the peace agreement. In that regard, he stated that the peace process was back on track, adding that vigilance was nonetheless necessary because peace remained fragile. Furthermore, he pointed out that he was convinced that promoting the implementation of the peace agreement was the best opportunity for Mali to address its multiple challenges, and stressed the importance of statements coming from the Council on its support for MINUSMA and its role in the implementation of the peace process. To that end, the deployment of MINUSMA military observers, expected to be operational by the middle of October, would help in the task of observing and reporting on ceasefire violations, he explained. He welcomed the Council's readiness to consider targeted sanctions

against those obstructing or threatening implementation of the agreement, adding that there was a strong need to ensure the delivery of peace dividends, especially to the population in conflict-affected areas.

Subsequently, under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of Mali stated that the optimism created by the signing and the first phase of implementation of the Agreement had unfortunately been dampened for several months by the persistence of a number of threats and challenges that remained to be addressed, such as terrorism, drug trafficking and all other forms of organized crime in the region of the Sahel-Sahara. He stressed that the delays observed in the implementation of the Agreement derived essentially from ongoing incidents on the ground and from multiple violations of the ceasefire by certain actors who were, nonetheless, signatories of the Agreement, recalling that the Government had consistently condemned all violations of the Agreement and called for independent investigations in order to identify those responsible and punish the perpetrators. He emphasized as well that such incidents should not serve as a pretext for armed movements that had signed the Agreement to hold the peace process hostage, and reiterated the need to accelerate the implementation of the measures provided for by the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. He concluded by stating that mechanisms for monitoring ceasefire violations must be activated, underscoring the need to implement provisions on cantonment, security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. In addition, he warned about the disruptive role of terrorist groups and drug traffickers and urged Council members to support the decision of the Heads of States members of the Nouakchott Process to create a rapid response intervention force to combat those groups.

In the closed consultations that followed, the members of the Security Council reiterated their full support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and to MINUSMA; welcomed the positive political dynamic in the light of the recent cessation of hostilities; and stressed the urgent need for the Malian parties to immediately implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, emphasizing that the ceasefire must be fully respected and violators investigated and prosecuted, leaving open the consideration of targeted sanctions against those obstructing the implementation of the Agreement.

Burkina Faso

On 6 October, Security Council members held closed consultations, under "Any other business", on the situation in Burkina Faso. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), Mohamed Ibn Chambas (via videoconference from Dakar) reported on his last visit to the country, from 15 to 26 September 2015. He also briefed the Council on the upcoming presidential election in Guinea.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General described at length the developments in Burkina Faso since 15 September and underscored the importance of the upcoming presidential election and the need for security sector reform. In this regard, he explained that the electoral calendar was adjusted, with the elections postponed only for two weeks. The Special Representative informed Security Council members that he had received a commitment from the interim President of Burkina Faso, Michel Kafando, that no effort would be spared to make sure

investigations of those involved in the coup d'état would be carried out impartially and according to the legal procedures. Additionally, the Special Representative expressed his willingness to send observers to the trials, affirming that the burden of proof is on the Government to ensure that processes are transparent. He expressed his intention to send an expert in security sector reform to Burkina Faso in order to advise the authorities, particularly in connection with the dissolution of the presidential guard. To conclude, he reported that the International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso would meet in the weeks following the Council's consultations to assess the readiness of the institutions responsible for the elections, and stressed the importance of those meetings as a sign of solidarity and commitment to the people of Burkina Faso.

Security Council members unanimously supported the preventive diplomacy work carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, expressing satisfaction that the coup d'état had not destabilized the political process further, welcomed the efforts of the international community and also appealed for the holding of transparent and credible presidential elections.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 7 October, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Martin Kobler, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Said Djinnit, briefed the Security Council on the basis of the most recent report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO (S/2015/741) and on his report on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2015/735).

Mr. Kobler, in his final briefing to the Security Council as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO, stated that the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was increasingly marked by the electoral process, with political tensions running high. He highlighted that peaceful, timely and credible elections in November 2016 would send a clear message that the nation was keen on a peaceful transition of power and consolidation of peace. In that regard, he voiced concern about the increasing number of human rights violations, particularly violations of the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and appealed to the authorities of the country to decisively address questions related to the sequencing of the electoral calendar, the electoral budget and the update of the voter registry. With regard to the situation in the east of the country, he informed the Council that refugees were gradually returning home in some areas, but that the population remained wary of a fragile peace. He recalled that the existence of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) remained one of the most important hindrances to peace in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. He welcomed the criminal convictions of two FDLR leaders by a German court and the corresponding long prison terms, even though there were still 1,100 FDLR elements continuing to carry out murder, rape and mutilations. In that regard, he pointed out that the only efficient solutions to address the security situation were joint operations by MONUSCO and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for which the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Joseph Kabila, had not yet given the green light,

and called on the President to instruct Congolese armed forces to resume cooperation.

With regard to the gradual withdrawal and exit of MONUSCO from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General warned that such an exit should not be undertaken hastily, recalling the assessment of the strategic dialogue between the United Nations and the Government, and pointing out that the security situation had not improved or had even deteriorated in 21 out of 28 territories affected by armed conflicts. He supported a process based on Security Council resolution 2211 (2015) that would set in motion the exit strategy for MONUSCO. On another note, he said that sexual exploitation and abuse cases had not only tarnished the Mission's reputation but had also added to the suffering and burden of the most vulnerable populations. In that regard, and together with the Force Commander and the Police Commissioner, he had sensitized thousands of civilian and military peacekeepers, pointing out that prevention and accountability should become ingrained in the Mission's modus operandi. Finally, he stated that he was departing with a feeling of satisfaction and pride, but also with a sense that the Mission's mandate had not yet been fulfilled, as he could not say with certainty whether the progress attained was sustainable.

Presenting the latest report on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2015/735), the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region underscored that some of the greatest challenges to the region were the presence of armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and violence against civilians, particularly women, stating that those negative elements must be neutralized, as it was a regional imperative to achieve peace and eliminate distrust. He said the Government's actions against armed groups, especially FDLR, should be supported by the intervention brigade of MONUSCO, in line with relevant Security Council decisions, and that joint operations with the Congolese armed forces should be restarted in the east. As for ex-M23 combatants, he informed the Council that many of them were in Uganda and Rwanda, and that both his Office and MONUSCO were working with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to facilitate their repatriation and implement the Nairobi Declaration, welcoming the September decision by defence ministers to speed the repatriation of ex-M23 fighters held in camps in Rwanda and of former FDLR fighters camped in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Turning to the electoral processes, he cautioned against the risk of a political crisis, citing Burundi as a recent example, by calling on all parties to engage in an inclusive dialogue led by the East African Community. Finally, he supported an integrated regional approach to better manage refugees and internally displaced persons, recalling women's crucial role in transforming the region and promoting the objectives of the Framework.

Subsequently, under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo stated that the recruitment of children as soldiers had been outlawed since 2001 through a biometric census of the army and strict implementation of the law, informing that with 46,000 child soldiers identified and returned to civilian life, there were no more children in the Congolese armed forces. With regard to sexual violence, he said that the President had mandated zero tolerance and established courts that travelled throughout the country to render justice. Additionally, he

informed that the Congolese armed forces had carried out a forced disarmament of FDLR, asking for support from the Council to facilitate repatriation to Rwanda or relocation to a third country in the region. Finally, he mentioned that negotiations on the strategic dialogue with the United Nations were deadlocked, expressing hope that they would eventually conclude with an action plan and withdrawal strategy for MONUSCO, for which his Government was committed to negotiations in a spirit of mutual trust.

In informal consultations, Council members continued to engage with the Head of MONUSCO and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region on the future of the Mission and its cooperation with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They reiterated their commitment to combating armed groups, to the gradual withdrawal of MONUSCO and to the smooth functioning of the elections in a peaceful, transparent and credible manner, in compliance with the Constitution.

On 28 October, the Permanent Representative of Jordan, as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, briefed the Security Council, in closed consultations, to address the content and recommendations of the midterm report of the Group of Experts (see S/2015/797), as well as other outstanding issues before the Committee. The Permanent Representative went through the highlights of the report, including the fight against armed groups, the illegal exploitation of natural resources and violations of international humanitarian law. The Committee's Chair expressed her intention to organize various meetings for the remainder of the year, including a meeting on 20 November with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, and recalled her readiness to contact promptly the countries in the region that did not answer the letters that were sent to them in May. Council members discussed the need to re-establish cooperation between MONUSCO and the Congolese armed forces as soon as possible, in order to fight the armed groups, particularly FDLR, while recalling that sanctions were a good tool for fighting those groups.

The situation in the Central African Republic

On 7 October, Security Council members were briefed on the latest developments in the Central African Republic, in closed consultations, under "Any other business", by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous. The Under-Secretary-General strongly condemned the outbreak of violence in the country, especially in Bangui, which, in his words, constituted a deliberate attempt by François Bozizé and Michel Djotodia to destabilize the country. He sought support from the Council for the following aspects of a six-point plan: a revised electoral calendar, so as to hold the elections as soon as possible; investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the violence, including sanctions from the Council; support from the international mediation for the celebration of elections and to defend against spoilers; no deployment of the Armed Forces before the reform of the security sector; a request to troop-contributing countries to expedite the upgrading of their capabilities in order to reach United Nations standards for contingent-owned equipment and transportation; and adaptation of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to respond to such situations if repeated.

Security Council members unanimously condemned the outbreak of violence, which constituted a deliberate attempt to destabilize the Central African Republic and to jeopardize the transition process. They further condemned the attacks against civilians, humanitarian actors, convoys and MINUSCA, calling on the Transitional Authorities to swiftly investigate the violence and bring the perpetrators to justice, and showed the Council's readiness to consider sanctions against those who undermined peace, security and stability in the Central African Republic. Many Council members supported the six-point proposal of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

At the request of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Council members asked the Presidency to make démarches with Uganda, Benin, and Gabon (as President of the Economic Community of Central African States, in view of the summit which was scheduled to be held in Malabo on 14 October) to point out the important role that countries in the region should play in supporting the stability of the Central African Republic. The three démarches were carried out in the subsequent days.

Following the meeting, the Security Council issued a press statement condemning in the strongest terms the attack against a convoy of MINUSCA during which one peacekeeper from Burundi was killed and another was injured.

On 20 October, the Security Council adopted a statement by the President (S/PRST/2015/17), strongly condemning the upsurge of violence and instability in the Central African Republic and reiterating its decision to apply the asset freeze and travel ban contained in its resolution 2196 (2015) to individuals and entities engaging in or providing support for acts undermining the country's peace, stability or security. The Council also reiterated that those responsible for the violence, both perpetrators and those otherwise participating, should be held accountable. It demanded that all those who sought to weaken the Transitional Government from within and outside the Central African Republic cease all violence and destabilizing activities immediately, laying down their arms and implementing fully the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in the Central African Republic, signed on 23 July 2014 in Brazzaville, as well as the agreement on the principles of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform, adopted at the Bangui Forum in May 2015. The Council called upon the Transitional Authorities to launch, with technical assistance from MINUSCA, investigations to identify those responsible for the violence and bring them to justice. It also reiterated the critical importance and urgency of the elections to be held by the end of 2015 in a free, fair and transparent manner, which were to be inclusive of all components of society, in accordance with the Transitional Constitutional Charter.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

On 9 October, the Security Council adopted resolution 2241 (2015) by a vote of 13 in favour, zero against and 2 abstentions (Russian Federation and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)), extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for two months, until 15 December 2015. In the resolution, the Council acknowledged that the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, to resolve the nearly two-year conflict, signed in August 2015, was the first step in reversing the difficult political and economic situation, as well as the humanitarian and security catastrophe. In the resolution, the

Council emphasized that individuals or entities responsible for or complicit in, or having engaged in, directly or indirectly, actions or policies that threatened the peace, security or stability of South Sudan could be designated for targeted sanctions, pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), and urged all parties to engage in an open and fully inclusive national dialogue intended to secure lasting peace, reconciliation and good governance. In this regard, the Council re-authorized the use of all necessary means to protect civilians, monitor and investigate abuses and violations of human rights, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and provide assistance for monitoring the fulfilment of the ceasefire and the broader Agreement. The Council made a series of requests to the Secretary-General: to prioritize the deployment of UNMISS personnel to the authorized military and police strength; to conduct a mandate review within 45 days of the adoption of the resolution; and to provide an assessment for capabilities focused on civilian and force structure capabilities. The Council demanded that the Government of South Sudan comply thoroughly with the Status of Forces Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan concerning the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, also demanded that parties allow, in accordance with relevant provisions of international law and United Nations guiding principles of emergency humanitarian assistance, the rapid, safe and unhindered access of relief personnel and delivery of humanitarian assistance, and further demanded that all parties immediately cease all forms of violence.

Some members expressed concern over provisions on the potential use of unmanned aerial systems, sanctions and the role of the United Nations in the establishment of a hybrid court to prosecute the perpetrators of serious crimes in South Sudan.

Speaking under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure, the Permanent Representative of South Sudan stressed that his Government had not been consulted on the text and that some of the issues on which South Sudan has clearly stated its position had not been taken into account in the resolution.

The situation in Libya

On 9 October, the Security Council issued a press statement welcoming the announcement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Bernardino León, of the proposed names for the Presidency Council of the Libyan Government of National Accord; commending the dialogue participants on finalizing the Political Agreement for the Government of National Accord, after comprehensive and broad consultations; calling on all Libyans, representatives of the people, political parties, municipalities and civil society, to unite wholeheartedly and in a spirit of reconciliation behind the settlement; thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team for their efforts; and expressing the gratitude of Council members to those Member States that facilitated the dialogue, in particular Morocco for its efforts in advancing the agreement, including through hosting the Libyan dialogue.

On 17 October, the Security Council issued another press statement, recalling the statement of 9 October and urging all Libyan parties to endorse and sign the Political Agreement, as presented on 8 October, and to work swiftly towards the formation of a Government of National Accord. Council members stressed that the

Agreement offered a real prospect for resolving Libya's political, security and institutional crises and noted that the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya was prepared to designate those who threaten Libya's peace, stability and security or who undermine the successful completion of its political transition.

The situation in Somalia

On 14 October, the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, Atul Khare, briefed the Security Council on the strategic review of the United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia (UNSOA), carried out between July and September 2015. The Under-Secretary-General stated the urgent need for a significant strengthening of UNSOA, with its efforts reprioritized around strategic objectives that were set by the 15 members of the Security Council. Such changes meant redefining the Support Office's clients as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the Somalia National Army. He informed the Council that medical support infrastructure would be extended to provide medical evacuation assistance to the Somali national police in areas where AMISOM operated. Additionally, he stressed that critical support would need to come from the Council, the General Assembly, Member States and the African Union, given that UNSOA was working in a significantly non-permissive environment, against the backdrop of Al-Shabaab and a humanitarian crisis, with fatalities in AMISOM in 2014 having exceeded the combined deaths from malicious acts in all United Nations peacekeeping operations combined, during the same year. He continued by stressing that the logistical enabling environment was also weak, affected by insecurity in the major supply routes, where three quarters of all improvised explosive device attacks against AMISOM occurred. Furthermore, he stated that the Security Council would need to strengthen the Support Office's accountability framework, through a clear mandate focused on the delivery of support to its clients. That would require a stronger reporting relationship with the Council, a leadership function headed by an Assistant Secretary-General and a new name for the Office. In this regard, he remarked that logistical support had been agreed with AMISOM.

In closed consultations, during which the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for UNSOM, Rai Zenenga, was present via videoconference from Mogadishu to respond to any relevant questions from Security Council members, the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support highlighted several issues, including: the positive contribution of UNSOA to supporting the gains made by AMISOM and UNSOM as evidence of success in the partnership between the United Nations, the African Union and Member States in sustaining African Union peace support operations; the need to continue investing in and supporting that partnership; and the Secretary-General's intention to strengthen UNSOA and the partnership with the African Union, for which he was seeking the support of the Security Council. Council members conveyed their full support for all the efforts of the Federal Government of Somalia, the Somali people and the international community aimed at bringing peace and stability to Somalia and the region. They also reiterated that the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union constitutes an essential asset in this regard, which needs to be preserved and further enhanced, highlighting their full support to UNSOA, UNSOM and AMISOM and commending

their civilian and military staff for their invaluable sacrifices and efforts in the fight against Al-Shabaab.

On 23 October, the Security Council adopted resolution 2244 (2015) by a vote of 14 in favour and 1 abstention (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), extending the arms embargo on Somalia until 15 November 2016 while reaffirming the country's sovereignty over its natural resources. It also reaffirmed the arms embargo on Eritrea. The Council also extended the mandate of the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group until 15 December 2016, and reiterated its expectation that the Government of Eritrea would facilitate the Group's entry into that country. Reaffirming Somalia's sovereignty over its natural resources, the Council underlined the vital importance of the Federal Government of Somalia putting in place a resource-sharing agreement to ensure that the national petroleum sector did not become a source of increased tension. The Council condemned the ongoing export of charcoal from Somalia in violation of the total ban on charcoal exports. The Council expressed serious concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Somalia and condemned in the strongest terms increased attacks against humanitarian actors. It also expressed concern about continued reports of corruption, diversion of public resources and financial impropriety involving members of the Federal Government, Regional Administrations and the Federal Parliament, underlining that individuals engaged in acts that threatened Somalia's peace and reconciliation process might be listed for targeted measures. Also in that resolution, the Council urged the Government of Eritrea to allow access or provide information, including to the Monitoring Group, on the Djiboutian prisoners missing in action since clashes between the two countries from 10 to 12 June 2008.

Following the vote, the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela explained that his delegation had abstained because the negotiating process had not taken certain points of view into account. Speaking under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure, the Permanent Representative of Somalia stressed that the Federal Government had worked tirelessly over the past year to reduce threats to peace and security and had shown its commitment to ensuring compliance with the Council's resolutions, having functioning institutions and with four legislative instruments pending before Parliament related to public finance management reform. Furthermore, he stressed that while Somalia did not agree with all the findings of the Monitoring Group, it would seek to strengthen their relationship further, and the Government would be pleased to welcome the Group on a more frequent basis. Also under rule 37, the Permanent Representative of Eritrea noted that the two justifications used to impose sanctions on his country were alleged support for Al-Shabaab and Asmara's dispute with Djibouti. However, the Monitoring Group had found no evidence of support for Al-Shabaab, he said, adding that Eritrea and Djibouti had asked Qatar to mediate their dispute. He regretted that the Council had decided to extend the sanctions for another year, noting that sanctions affected the poor and restricted Eritrea's ability to defend its sovereignty.

The Sudan and South Sudan (Darfur)

On 14 October, Council members held closed consultations under "Any other business" on the situation in Darfur to address the impediments that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) was facing from the Government of the Sudan. The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations stressed that 190 containers of supplies for UNAMID, mainly food,

remained locked in Port Sudan, some of which had been there for up to 84 days. At that rate, he estimated that on 1 November, the mission would have exhausted its reserves. He also explained the contingency plan, which included the purchase of food on the local market, but stressed that it could only be implemented in the short term due to the limited supply of commodities in the Sudan. Furthermore, he reported limitations on the issuance of visas by the Government of the Sudan, which was considered as being directed to specific areas of the mission, with 50 per cent of posts remaining vacant in relation to human rights, 40 per cent in relation to protection of civilians and 30 per cent in the security sector. In addition, the validity of residence visas was no longer annual, because it had been reduced to six months. He also explained that a third recurring problem was the continuing violation of the Status of Forces Agreement, especially regarding access to certain areas. The Under-Secretary-General warned that the restrictions were severely limiting the capacity of UNAMID and affecting the discharge of its mandate and set those actions against the context of the divergence of views regarding the presence of UNAMID in the country. He added that those issues had been brought to the attention of the Sudanese authorities several times. The Under-Secretary-General stated that support from the Security Council was essential and suggested that the President of the Security Council undertake a démarche with the Permanent Representative of the Sudan. He recognized that there must be an exit strategy for UNAMID, but subject to certain benchmarks. Those would include the restoration of peace and internal security, where no progress was envisaged in the short term.

Council members expressed different points of view regarding the obstacles imposed on UNAMID by the Government of the Sudan and mandated the Presidency of the Security Council to make a démarche with the Permanent Representative of the Sudan.

Following the decision taken by the Council, the President of the Security Council met the Permanent Representative of the Sudan and conveyed the Security Council's concern over the impediments suffered by UNAMID in fulfilling its mandate. As a result, a great number of containers were cleared from Port Sudan in subsequent days.

On 28 October, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on UNAMID. In his briefing, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Edmond Mulet, reported that the overall security situation in Darfur remained precarious and unpredictable, stressing that a comprehensive resolution of the Darfur conflict, which would allow for the return of over 2.6 million displaced persons, required first and foremost a political settlement between the Government and the armed movements. He said that it was of crucial importance that meetings on the cessation of hostilities, as well as the national dialogue, took place as scheduled and created a momentum for future comprehensive direct talks on Darfur. The Assistant Secretary-General informed the Council that from December 2014 to June 2015, the forces of the Government of the Sudan had implemented the second phase of the counter-insurgency Operation Decisive Summer, with considerable gains against the non-signatory armed movements. That had led to over 104,000 newly confirmed displacements as well as 69,000 unconfirmed displacements. He noted that there had been a pause since June, owing to the rainy season. However, there had been no pause in intercommunal fighting, exacerbated by the involvement of local armed groups. He went on to explain that on 28 September, the President of the Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, had issued decrees providing for a two-month cessation

of hostilities in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states, and an unconditional pardon to members of the political and armed opposition groups who decided to participate in the National Dialogue process. On 18 October, the Sudanese Revolutionary Front had declared its own six-month cessation of hostilities in accordance with its 14 September road map. The Assistant Secretary-General stressed that, despite those positive signals, the level of distrust between the two sides had not diminished. Despite the obstacles that UNAMID was facing, he informed the Council that the mission remained steadfast in the implementation of its strategic priorities, including support for the mediation of intercommunal conflict, through focusing on developing early warning capacity, promoting dialogue between farming and pastoral communities and supporting local institutions. He urged the Government of the Sudan to maintain its current cooperation in ensuring the swift clearance of remaining UNAMID food rations and to lift all existing restrictions on the free movement of its personnel and assets and regarding the issuance of visas.

Speaking under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure, the Permanent Representative of the Sudan expressed deep concern about the report's references to a lack of progress towards a peaceful solution and political resolution of the conflict in Darfur, as well as its call for the Government and armed movements to resume talks without preconditions. He hoped that no one sought to be absolved of adhering to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. He said the ongoing inclusive National Dialogue aimed to explore a configuration for the Sudan's future political scene by building consensus on drafting a permanent constitution, and that presidential and parliamentary elections had been held in April, including in the five states of Darfur, which was indicative of the prevalence in that region of post-conflict measures. He clarified that violence in Darfur did not signal an internal conflict commensurate with that outlined in Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions. In his view, the same was true for the political narrative depicting the security situation. He also stated that references to Sudan's withholding of visas for UNAMID staff and to the number of displaced persons were inaccurate. In concluding, he stressed that the report's arbitrary numbers aimed only to deem the Government non-cooperative and thus install a peacekeeping operation.

In closed consultations, most Security Council members welcomed the gradual release of the containers with food to UNAMID, stressing the effectiveness of the démarche carried out by the Presidency of the Security Council and direct dialogue in such situations. Concerning the problems with the issuance of visas, the Security Council was divided. On the one hand, some Member States strongly criticized the systematic and selective denial of visas by the Government of the Sudan as seriously affecting the operation of the mission and expressed concern at the fact that the positions related to human rights and the protection of civilians were the most affected. On the other hand, some other members were sceptical of the figures presented by the Assistant Secretary-General, which in their view strongly contradicted those presented by the Permanent Representative of the Sudan. A majority of Member States welcomed, albeit cautiously, the announcement of a ceasefire by the Government of the Sudan and the Sudanese Revolutionary Front, which they considered encouraging. Some delegations called for increased pressure to compel the Sudanese Revolutionary Front to give up what they considered to be destructive activities. Some members argued that, in order to start working on an exit strategy for UNAMID, the Government of the Sudan should meet the

established benchmarks, and in their view, the Government had not, so far, met any of them. Other Council members welcomed the next meeting of the Tripartite Mechanism, to be held in Khartoum in early November, as proposed by the Government of the Sudan, and called for greater interaction between the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan to find common ground. Some members stressed that each peacekeeping operation, including UNAMID, should have an exit strategy.

The situation in Burundi

On 21 October, the Security Council held closed consultations on the situation in Burundi, where Council members were briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman. The Under-Secretary-General provided an overview on the developments in the country, listing the multiple attacks on civilians and opposition members and highlighting its ethnic dimension and the risk of destabilization for the Great Lakes Region. He denounced the impunity for the attacks, the violent rhetoric with ethnic bias, the increase in the number of refugees and the exchange of accusations between Burundi and Rwanda. He referred critically to the National Commission for the inter-Burundian dialogue, stating that the opposition might not be represented in the Commission. He insisted on the worrying isolation of the President of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza, who rejected any international or regional accompaniment. As a positive sign, he mentioned the strong message contained in the communiqué of the African Union and he requested the support of the Security Council for that position.

Most Security Council members expressed their concern about the growing ethnic dimension of the conflict, which could affect the whole region, although one delegation criticized the fact that the progress made was not being taken into account. While all Council members claimed support for the communiqué of the African Union and one delegation proposed a statement by the President in this regard, some members referred to the communiqué by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region as a more balanced option. Some Council members reiterated the importance of ensuring that the inter-Burundian dialogue be conducted outside the country so that the opposition might be able to participate.

On 28 October, the Security Council issued a statement by the President (S/PRST/2015/18) voicing its deep concerns about the growing insecurity, the continued rise in violence and the persisting political impasse in Burundi, marked by a lack of dialogue among Burundian stakeholders. The Council also expressed its deep concern about an increase in human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions. Other concerns cited in the statement included the prevalence of impunity, the daily assassinations, the restricted freedom of expression and the worsening of the humanitarian situation, as illustrated by the more than 200,000 Burundian citizens seeking refuge. Further, the Council strongly condemned all human rights violations and acts of unlawful violence committed by security forces, by militias and by other illegal armed groups. It expressed its determination to bring the perpetrators of such acts to justice and welcomed the African Union's decision to launch investigations into those cases. Recalling the importance of respecting the nation's Constitution as well as the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi of 28 August 2000, the Council urged all stakeholders to reject armed rebellion and engage in dialogue. It also emphasized the importance of the

mediation efforts led by the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, on behalf of the East African Community, and as endorsed by the African Union, as well as the importance of urgently resuming that process. The Council also welcomed the decision of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to increase the number of its human rights observers and military experts in Burundi and noted the African Union's decision to impose sanctions against the stakeholders perpetuating violence and impeding the search for a solution.

The situation in the Middle East

Syrian Arab Republic (chemical weapons)

On 7 October, the Security Council held closed consultations on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). The Under-Secretary-General and Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Kim Won-soo, briefed Council members. He reported the satisfactory progress in the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, including associated facilities and the efforts to verify the arsenal declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. He mentioned that it was expected that by the end of 2015, 100 per cent of that material would be eliminated.

According to the Acting High Representative, the Declaration Assessment Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), in its eleventh mission in the field, noted that there were some discrepancies to be resolved in the initial Syrian declaration. Therefore it was likely that the Executive Council of OPCW would extend the mandate of the Team until early 2016. It was expected that both the Declaration Assessment Team and the Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic of OPCW would continue their work, so as to be able to show their results to OPCW and the Security Council by the end of October. The Acting High Representative explained that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism should be in place by the beginning of November, and should present its first report after 90 days, as requested in Security Council resolution 2235 (2015). He urged Member States to make contributions because, at that point in time, they had not received any funding for an estimated budget of $3 million.

Security Council members welcomed the appointment of Virginia Gamba as Head of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and indicated the desirability of the Mechanism beginning to function as soon as possible. Many of them stressed the need to ensure full independence, impartiality and objectivity of the Mechanism's work in accordance with its mandate. Council members also positively welcomed the destruction of most of the arsenal. In this regard, most Council members stressed that Syrian chemical disarmament could not be considered complete until the discrepancies in its arsenal were clarified, while others noted good progress in the assessment made by OPCW, as a result of the ongoing cooperation with the Syrian authorities. One Member State proposed the adoption of a resolution to extend the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism to Iraq, according to the complaint submitted by Iraq to OPCW on 15 September 2015 regarding the possible use of chemical substances in its territory.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 16 October, the Security Council held an urgent briefing on the situation in the Middle East. The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, briefed Council members on the situation on the ground owing to the violence in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. He stressed that the crisis sparked by fresh violence in the three locations could not be stopped by security measures alone, urging Palestinians and Israelis to respect decades-old status quo arrangements around holy sites, and called for political leaders on all sides to calm their language in a joint effort to de-escalate the situation. The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs said that the fire set by a group of Palestinians at the holy site of Joseph's Tomb in the West Bank city of Nablus was particularly troubling, in the light of its religious dimension. He welcomed President Mahmoud Abbas' condemnation of the attack and announcement that a committee had been formed to investigate the crime. All sides had to respect all holy sites and reject the extremist elements pushing a political agenda that sought to transform the current situation from a national to a religious struggle. The Assistant Secretary-General stressed that the incident followed a deadly week in the West Bank, citing 11 reported attacks against Israelis and Israeli security forces that had left four Israelis and nine Palestinians dead, and 16 Israelis and four Palestinians wounded. In Gaza, 7 Israelis and 32 Palestinians had been killed, while 124 Israelis and more than 1,110 Palestinians had been injured since 1 October. In this regard, he highlighted that, since then, the Israeli Defense Forces had significantly bolstered their presence in Israeli cities, while many Arab neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem had been surrounded, with access roads blocked and checkpoints established. Movement restrictions in the West Bank had been reinstated and ad hoc checkpoints erected at more than 100 sites in the area. He recalled that the United Nations had maintained a consistent position on those issues. Collective punishment, including house demolitions, contravened international law and he urged Israel to cease that practice.

In accordance with the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council and previous practice in this regard, the Permanent Observer of the observer State of Palestine participated in the briefing and stated that he had asked the Council to urgently intervene to end aggression by settlers and extremists towards Palestinian people and shrines. The Holy Shrine and the Al-Aqsa mosque had been subjected to continued aggression by extremists, who wanted to impose a change from the present situation, threatening to turn the conflict into a religious one. He asked the Council to force Israel to withdraw its armed formations immediately, especially in occupied East Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa mosque, and to provide protection for the Palestinian people until occupation was over.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, Israel's Deputy Permanent Representative said his country was facing an onslaught of terrorism where men, women and children were stabbed daily, with no call from the Council for the Palestinian leadership to end incitement. He mentioned that Israel was taking all steps necessary to defend its people, and that the violence had begun with lies about the Temple Mount. He announced that the Israeli Prime Minister was willing to meet with Palestinian leadership to bring calm to the region, while recalling that the Council must insist that Mr. Abbas come to the table, as only direct negotiations could lead to peace, he added.

Security Council members condemned in the strongest terms all violence in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and elsewhere, stressing the importance of preventing inflammatory rhetoric or actions that fed violence, asking both parties to stop the violence and ensure measures were taken to de-escalate the situation and to uphold the historic status quo at Jerusalem's holy sites.

On 21 October, Security Council members held urgent closed consultations, as requested by the Secretary-General, to give an update on the situation in the Middle East. The Secretary-General briefed the Council via videoconference from Amman, in the framework of his visit to the region, during which he met, among others, the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, as well as the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu. A representative from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was present in the room in order to report on the escalation of events and the protection issues. The Secretary-General showed great concern for the increase of violence and urged the Security Council to keep taking measures to restore calm and security. He reiterated the need to preserve the two-State solution as well as to respect the status quo within Haram al-Sharif/ Temple Mount, calling for the cessation of violence and for parties to reject its incitement. He encouraged Israel and Jordan to work together to restore calm in Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount and welcomed a visit of the Quartet to the region.

During the consultations, Security Council members were informed that the Secretariat had already distributed to the Council a letter from the Secretary-General with a summary of historical precedents compiled by the Office of Legal Affairs for the purpose of assisting and informing any future work that might take place within the Secretariat on the issue of protection of civilians (S/2015/809). In this regard, the Secretary-General stated that the State of Palestine strongly asked for measures to be taken to protect its population, as well as for a United Nations presence.

Security Council members expressed concern about the increase of violence in Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount and showed support for the role of the Secretary-General and his trip to the region. Some Council members mentioned the need for an active role of the Quartet. Some members also mentioned the need for further engagement of the Council, as well as a greater role of other partners and regional actors.

On 22 October, the Security Council convened its quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East, at the ministerial level. The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, José Manuel García-Margallo. In his briefing to the Council, the Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, told the Council that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had entered a dangerous phase amid a fresh wave of violence in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza; he pressed leaders from both sides to publicly take a stand against extremism and incitement, as failure to do so left the door open to promote destructive extremist agendas. He said that 47 Palestinians and seven Israelis had been killed, and more than 5,000 Palestinians and 70 Israelis had been injured, since the beginning of October. He recalled that the recent visit of the Secretary-General to Israel, Palestine and Jordan had one goal: to support collective efforts to stop the violence and to begin to draw a political horizon that would lead to lasting peace. There was no justification whatsoever for murder, he said. He went on to state that the crisis would not have erupted if Palestinians had had hope about a viable State of their own, an economy that offered jobs and the ability to emerge from a stifling

and humiliating occupation. Likewise, he said the situation had sharpened a sense of fear among Israelis who felt that their personal security had been threatened and saw signs of growing anti-Semitism around the world and attempts that they believed aimed to delegitimize their country. Taken together, the failed peace initiatives and leaders' reluctance to make progress had created a highly combustible reality in a region plagued by violent religious extremism. He added that the vitriolic nature of the public discourse was alarming, calling on all stakeholders, including the Palestinian leadership, to condemn the violence.

In accordance with the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council and previous practice in this regard, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, Riad Malki, said Palestinians were under lockdown and assault by Israel, adding that the Council could not justify remaining on the sidelines while the violence risked spiralling into a religious conflict fomented by the extremist Israeli Government. In addition, he said that a time frame must be set to end the occupation and options considered for the protection of Palestinians. Equally urgent was the dangerous situation in occupied East Jerusalem and ensuring that Israel complied with its obligation to preserve the status quo.

Speaking under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, the Permanent Representative of Israel said the streets of his country had been swept by a savage tide of terror where attacks against Israelis were provoked for no reason other than that they were Jews living in their historic homeland. He added that Israel, like any country, was obliged to defend its citizens. He recalled that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had repeatedly accused Israel of trying to change the status quo, which in his view was absolutely false, stressing that Palestinians were trying to score easy victories without having to negotiate or recognize the Jewish State. He went on to say that the best way to reduce tensions was to urge President Abbas to accept the Israeli Prime Minister's call to meet with him.

Mr. García-Margallo expressed concern about the risk that the two-State solution, first minted in the Madrid Peace Conference, held in 1991, and later embodied in the Oslo Accords, would become unviable due to the exhaustion of the negotiating track and the escalating violence. In order to prevent this from happening, and therefore to rekindle the dialogue and stop the violence and terrorism, he announced that Spain had offered to host the dialogue in a new peace conference, under the name Madrid II. Explaining in further detail, he stressed that Madrid II would be a relaunch of the peace process, combining direct dialogue between the parties to the multilateral track, with an international architecture acceptable to all parties and involving the countries of the region. In this context, the Security Council should go beyond the declaratory policy and play a key role in designing the road map and calendar for negotiations, culminating in the new international peace conference.

Throughout the day, speakers condemned the violence, urging Israeli and Palestinian leaders to stop incitement, reduce tensions and restore calm. Some expressed hope that the Secretary-General's visit and the upcoming meeting of the Quartet in Vienna, would attenuate the situation. While prospects for a two-State solution appeared to be diminishing, many advocated it as the only path to peace.

Member States also discussed during the debate the importance of the political solution for Syria and the dire humanitarian situation in the country, the situation in Yemen and the situation in Lebanon.

Yemen

On 23 October, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the situation in Yemen, where Council members were briefed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. The Special Envoy said consultations between the Government of Yemen and its opponents had been delayed over the former's need for clearer acceptance of Security Council resolution 2216 (2015). He added, however, that he had kept in touch with Houthi leaders and the General People's Congress, which were now committed to implementing the resolution, including a negotiated withdrawal from key cities and the surrender of weapons to the State. He went on to say that during his recent tour, he had updated the Government of Yemen, in Riyadh, as well as the leaders of Saudi Arabia on developments, and on his discussions with the Houthis. Similar discussions had been held on the margins of the General Assembly with the Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, and with the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman, as well as with interlocutors from the Russian Federation, all of whom supported efforts to reach a peaceful political solution. He recalled that on the basis of those developments, the President of Yemen, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, had informed the Secretary-General, in a letter dated 19 October, of his intention to send a delegation to the talks, adding that he would start working immediately with the Government of Yemen, the Houthis and others to agree on an agenda, date and format. The proposed negotiations would be aimed at advancing the withdrawal of militias from key cities, ensuring the release of prisoners, returning heavy weapons seized from the army, improving the humanitarian situation and resuming an inclusive political dialogue. He emphasized that as a first sign of hope, the talks must be nurtured. Indeed, the need was great; previous consultations had been cancelled owing to new preconditions, missed opportunities that had left Yemenis in increasing misery, with cities collapsing and citizens denied their most basic rights. He said that the return of the legitimate Government to Aden increased the prospects for a restoration of security, but extremists had rapidly taken advantage of the situation, with the bombing of mosques in Yemen becoming a common occurrence, in a country famed for its tolerance. He warned Council members that the longer the war continued, the more extremist groups would expand their presence.

As a positive sign, he said that he had attended a gathering of Yemeni women organized by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in Larnaca, Cyprus, where participants had called for urgent measures to improve the humanitarian situation, restore the flow of aid and commercial goods and ensure the protection of civilians. He said he planned to work with the yet-to-be-formed women's pact for peace and security and other civil society groups, to ensure their voices brought Yemen back to peaceful dialogue.

The Permanent Representative of Lithuania, as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), described the subsidiary body's work in the context of resolutions 2140 (2014), 2204 (2015) and 2216 (2015), noting that, pursuant to resolution 2204 (2015), 20 implementation reports from Member States had been received and were on the Committee's website. The Committee had received only one initial report and no subsequent reports relating to inspections carried out pursuant to the targeted arms embargo outlined in resolution 2216 (2015). She called upon all Member States that had not yet done so to submit the required reports. She recalled that on 29 July 2015, the Committee had amended

its guidelines to reflect provisions contained in resolutions 2204 (2015) and 2216 (2015). On 2 April 2015, new members of the Panel of Experts had been appointed by the Secretary-General (see S/2015/237), while a new arms expert had been appointed on 18 June (see S/2015/455). On 2 February 2015, Committee members had discussed the final report of the Panel of Experts (see S/2015/125) and agreed on the course of action for its recommendations. On 25 August, the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Yemen crisis had briefed the Committee on the United Nations verification and inspection mechanism. On 18 September, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict briefed the Committee. On 9 October, she continued, the Panel of Experts had shared information on international humanitarian law and the finance aspects of its mandate, underlining its need to investigate all violations, including through travel to all parts of Yemen. In order to promote transparency, the Committee had held an open briefing on 1 September for all Member States, featuring an overview of its mandate, the sanctions regime and remarks by the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts.

In closed consultations, Security Council members deplored the humanitarian situation and reiterated the importance of a ceasefire and of ensuring the unimpeded entry of commercial goods and humanitarian aid. In connection with the announcement of the Special Envoy regarding the possibility of a resumption of political dialogue, Council members welcomed the possibility of a new inclusive political dialogue, calling on the parties to act in good faith and without preconditions, expressing their strong support for United Nations leadership in the talks.

At the end of the meeting, Security Council members agreed on a press statement that was issued later, welcoming the announcement by the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen on the upcoming talks; commending the decision by the Government of Yemen to participate in the peace talks, along with other parties; expressing their appreciation and full support for the efforts of the United Nations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; and reaffirming their call on Yemeni parties to attend the announced talks and any such future talks and engage without preconditions and in good faith, including by resolving their differences through dialogue and consultations, rejecting acts of violence to achieve political goals and refraining from provocation and all unilateral actions to undermine the political transition.

Syrian Arab Republic (humanitarian situation)

On 27 October, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. In briefing the Council, Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, stressed that the crisis urgently required a political solution which addressed the root causes of the conflict and met the aspirations of the Syrian people who had suffered for far too long. He outlined that some 13.5 million people in Syria were in need of some form of protection and humanitarian assistance, more than 6 million of them children; 6.5 million people were displaced inside Syria and 4.2 million had fled the country, with neighbouring countries bearing an enormous burden. He reported that humanitarian workers were putting their lives on the line, but remained undeterred and strongly encouraged donors to maintain, and where possible increase, their generous support for life-saving humanitarian operations. He went on to state that

rising levels of fighting and violence over the past few weeks had had an enormous humanitarian impact, resulting in large-scale death, injury and displacement of civilians, particularly in northern Syria. Attacks on health-care facilities and health-care workers also remained relentless. Since the start of the conflict, Physicians for Human Rights had documented attacks on at least 313 medical facilities and the death of 679 medical workers. Relief organizations were still not able to get sustained, unimpeded access to millions of affected people. The latest estimates indicated that some 4.5 million people were living in hard-to-reach areas and only a small fraction of them were reached in 2015 owing to active conflict, shifting front lines, bureaucratic hurdles and conditions imposed by the parties. He stressed that the parties to the conflict continued to use siege as a weapon of war. In concluding, he expressed the hope that the Council and relevant Member States would continue to use their influence with the parties to the conflict to remind them to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, to distinguish between civilians and combatants and to take all feasible precautions to avoid further civilian injury and loss of life.

In closed consultations, Security Council members condemned the deteriorating situation in Syria, the expansion of terrorism, including by ISIL/Daesh, and the escalation of violence, in particular indiscriminate attacks against civilians by all parties. Some of them paid special attention to the reported use of barrel bombs and attacks on civilian infrastructure, medical personnel and humanitarian workers, as well as limitations to basic services and humanitarian assistance; they expressed concern over the lack of access to education of more than 2 million children, the situation of people trapped in besieged areas and the rise in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons. Some Council members commended neighbouring countries, which were now hosting 4 million refugees.

Security Council members also condemned the destruction of cultural heritage.

Lebanon

On 27 October, the Security Council held consultations on Lebanon and was briefed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), Terje Roed-Larsen, on the twenty-second semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (S/2015/764). Larsen addressed three main issues: the election of a President, the security situation and refugees. With regard to the election of a President he stressed that there had been little progress since the last time he had briefed the Council, in April 2015, adding that it did not appear that the crisis would be resolved in the short term. Touching upon the security situation, the Special Envoy stressed that Lebanon continued to face challenges to its stability and security, both internally and along its borders with the Syrian Arab Republic, including from terrorist and extremist groups and arms smuggling. With regard to refugees, he emphasized that the provision of basic schooling had been a particularly difficult endeavour, adding that the unmet financing needs amounted to $25 million. He acknowledged that support from donors would continue to be difficult to obtain as long as the Government operated without a president. In that regard, he called for assistance to Lebanon in carrying the burden of refugees.

Security Council members expressed their support for the security and the stability of Lebanon amid the regional challenges facing the country, in particular

the conflict in Syria. They called for the election of a President as soon as possible, and commended the efforts of Prime Minister Tammam Salam and his Government. Most members stressed the importance of the dissociation policy. Members called for increased international support to the Lebanese Armed Forces as well as to the Government of Lebanon with regard to the burden of hosting increasing numbers of Syrian refugees.

Americas

The question concerning Haiti

On 8 October, the Security Council held the semi-annual debate on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSTAH, Sandra Honoré, said the country had taken an all-important step to renew its democratic institutions, with the holding of executive, legislative and local elections on 9 August 2015, which in turn, was crucial for consolidating democracy and stability. Presenting the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/667), the Special Representative stressed that for the first time, the Provisional Electoral Council had taken punitive action against instigators of violence, sending a clear signal that such acts were no longer to be tolerated. With regard to the security environment, she informed that it had remained generally stable compared with previous electoral cycles, recalling that any violent election-related protests should be carefully monitored. To that end, she added that the Haitian national police, supported by the United Nations, was adjusting logistics and security plans for the coming rounds of elections. In order to allow for an orderly transfer of MINUSTAH activities, she said that the Secretary-General had recommended the extension of the Mission's mandate by one, possibly final, year, at current troop and police levels. She added that a strategic assessment mission would be deployed after the electoral cycle had been completed and the new Government had taken over and would make recommendations on the future presence of the United Nations. She highlighted the importance for the new administration of engaging at an early stage of the planning and decision-making process with regard to the United Nations presence in Haiti. In the meantime, she stated that MINUSTAH would focus on good offices, police development and the rule of law and human rights, among other areas.

Subsequently, under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of Haiti noted that the Provisional Electoral Council had shown its ability to manage the electoral process in a successful manner. He remarked that the elections to be held on 25 October 2015 were crucial for the success of the political transition in 2016, adding that prison reform and the implementation of a new criminal code were under way. With regard to MINUSTAH, he stressed that the Mission was still adapting to the new context, with the President opting for a reconfiguration that encouraged a gradual and orderly drawdown, with the transfer of responsibilities to Haitian institutions taking place according to an agreed timetable, as premature disengagement would create a security void. In that regard, he favoured maximum flexibility in drawdown modalities. The Permanent Representative remarked that the Mission continued to focus on key areas, including the rule of law, human rights, police development and State institutions, as well as work by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and humanitarian assistance and development. The following Member

States also expressed their views under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure: Guatemala, Brazil, Colombia, Uruguay, Peru, Canada, Mexico, Argentina and Jamaica. In accordance with rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure, the European Union also participated in the debate.

A great majority of Member States welcomed Haiti's ability to assume greater responsibility for its democratic processes, with many agreeing that if current trends continued, the United Nations presence would evolve significantly. Some members highlighted that the strengthening of the national police was vital, especially in meeting the goal of training 15,000 people by the end of 2016. Countries from the region expressed support for the extension of the mandate of MINUSTAH for another year, stating the need for the Security Council to act cautiously, in order to allow the new administration to consolidate State authority.

Most Security Council members expressed their support for the deployment of the strategic assessment mission once the electoral cycle was finalized and the new authorities were in office, and the need for the strategic assessment mission to work in close collaboration with the new Government. Some members mentioned that the Mission should begin its activities well before the end of the mandate of MINUSTAH. Many States insisted that any decision on the reconfiguration of MINUSTAH should take into account the overall stability and security situation in the country.

Some Security Council members recalled the dire humanitarian situation in Haiti, citing three factors: the cholera outbreak, the plight of internally displaced persons and food insecurity, and regretted the reduced funding to meet those needs.

On 14 October, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2243 (2015) extending the mandate of MINUSTAH for one year, until 15 October 2016, at force levels of up to 2,370 troops and 2,061 police, as recommended by the Secretary-General. The Council affirmed its intention to review by 15 October 2016 Haiti's overall capacity to ensure security and stability and the security conditions on the ground, so as to consider the possible withdrawal of MINUSTAH and transition to a future United Nations presence that would begin, no sooner than 15 October 2016, to continue to assist the Government of Haiti in consolidating peace, including support to the Haitian national police. The Security Council asked the Secretary-General to conduct a strategic assessment mission to Haiti and, on this basis, to present recommendations to the Council on the future presence and role of the United Nations in the country, preferably by 90 days after the inauguration of the new President, and ideally after the formation of a new government. Welcoming the holding of the first round of legislative elections on 9 August, the Council strongly urged Haiti's political actors to cooperate and without delaying ensure the holding of free, fair, inclusive, and transparent legislative, partial senatorial, municipal and local elections. It also encouraged the Government to promote increased women's political participation in Haiti. Noting that capacity-building for the Haitian national police remained a most critical task, the Council requested MINUSTAH to make renewed efforts to mentor and train police and corrections officers. Strongly condemning the grave violations against children affected particularly by criminal gang violence, as well as widespread rape and other sexual abuse of women and girls, the Council called upon the Government, with the support of the Mission and the United Nations country team, to promote and protect the rights of women and children, as well as to improve response to rape complaints

and access to justice for the victims of rape and other sexual crimes. It requested the Secretary-General to continue to ensure full compliance of all MINUSTAH personnel with the Organization's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. The Council further asked MINUSTAH to continue to support the country's authorities in controlling the flow of small arms, developing a weapons registry, reforming the weapons permit system and developing and implementing a national community policing doctrine.

Non-proliferation

Islamic Republic of Iran

On 21 October, Security Council members discussed the launch of a medium-range ballistic missile by the Islamic Republic of Iran, conducted on 10 October. Some Council members considered that it constituted a violation of resolution 1929 (2010). Recalling that the Security Council sanctions regime should be taken seriously, Council members agreed that until the International Atomic Energy Agency had verified compliance by Iran with a series of nuclear commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, resolutions of the sanctions regime on the Islamic Republic of Iran were still in force and that the Implementation Day may take still several months to occur.

In that regard, the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006) informed Security Council members that the Panel of Experts of the Committee would investigate the issue.

Thematic and other issues

Maintenance of international peace and security

(Libya)

On 9 October, the Security Council adopted resolution 2240 (2015), with 14 votes in favour and 1 abstention (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), authorizing Member States, for a period of one year, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they had reasonable grounds to suspect were being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking from that country. With the adoption of the resolution, Member States, acting nationally or through regional organizations, were authorized to use all measures, in full compliance with international law, in confronting migrant smugglers or human traffickers, and were called upon, in the context of being engaged in the fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking, to inspect, on the high seas off the coast of Libya, any unflagged vessels that they had reasonable grounds to believe had been, were being, or imminently would be used by organized criminal enterprises for migrant smuggling or human trafficking from Libya, including inflatable boats, rafts and dinghies.

After the vote, 13 Security Council members made statements in explanation of vote. The Permanent Representative of Libya, addressing the Council under rule 37 of its provisional rules of procedure, stressed that the resolution met the wishes of the European Union and took into account the concerns of Libya and other African countries, given that his Government could not extend its authority to the whole country and control its extensive borders. He recalled that the crisis must be

addressed with respect for international law, as well as respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in national affairs. He hoped that a new Government might be able to restore Libya's institutions in the capital, a necessary component towards reducing the flow of illegal migrants.

Women and peace and security: high-level review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000): from rhetoric to effective results

On 13 and 14 October, the Security Council held an open debate on women and peace and security, under the title "High-level review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000): from rhetoric to effective results". The meeting was chaired by the President of the Government of Spain, Mariano Rajoy. The Secretary-General; the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; the Director of the Congolese Women's Fund (speaking on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security), Julienne Lusenge; the co-founder and President of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (also on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security), Yanar Mohammed; and the founder of the non-governmental organization The Voice of Libyan Women, Alaa Murabit, participated as speakers in the debate.

The Secretary-General stressed that, at a time when armed extremist groups placed the subordination of women at the top of their agenda, the international community must place women's leadership and the protection of women's rights at the top of its agenda. He noted that the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) had underscored the pivotal link between gender equality and international peace and security. He continued, stating that the three major reviews of peace operations, the peacebuilding architecture and the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda highlighted that any reforms must include gender equality and women's leadership as central ingredients, and must be strongly grounded in human rights, adding that he would ensure that the target of 15 per cent of peacebuilding funds being devoted to gender equality and women's empowerment projects was met. On the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), he had suggested that the Council convene a ministerial-level review, every five years, to assess progress, renew commitments and address obstacles.

The Head of UN-Women, presenting the findings of the global study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), said that women's leadership and participation improved humanitarian assistance, strengthened peacekeepers' efforts, fostered the conclusion of peace talks and helped to counter violent extremism. She noted that the Organization had not met its gender equality targets. She announced the establishment of the Global Acceleration Instrument on women's engagement in peace and security and humanitarian affairs, which would channel more resources to women's organizations.

The Director of the Congolese Women's Fund, speaking on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, said that seven years earlier, she had addressed the Security Council, describing the rapes and massacres in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and had asked for concrete actions to implement resolution 1325 (2000). The exclusion of women from social and political life, however, was the reason that nothing had changed. Women, she said, must be included in all parts of peace processes at all levels, stressing that the United Nations

and the international community must demand women's participation in all peace talks, for which women should be provided with the necessary funds to participate.

Also speaking on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, the co-founder and President of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq implored the Security Council and the entire international community to implement their women, peace and security commitments. She said that to understand the crisis for Iraqi women, one could not ignore what had happened in 2003, when a Government had been formed as a result of the politics of division, based on sect, ethnicity and gender discrimination. She said that, in the absence of Government services, local women's groups met the needs of the vulnerable.

The founder of The Voice of Libyan Women stressed that the inclusion of women was of paramount importance to global stability. Women's participation in conflict prevention was critical to ensuring global peace and security, she said. Furthermore, she stated that the full potential of resolution 1325 (2000) would not be realized until the Security Council found it unthinkable to address a crisis without addressing women's rights; until humanitarian responders had full funding for their gender-specific services; until women grass-roots leaders found their work fully funded and politically supported; and until it became unimaginable that peace talks could be held without women's full engagement.

Security Council members then proceeded to vote on the draft resolution before them, unanimously adopting resolution 2242 (2015), recognizing the ongoing need for greater integration of resolution 1325 (2000) in its own work and expressing its intention to convene meetings of an Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security. More broadly, the Council urged the Secretary-General and United Nations bodies to better integrate gender perspectives into their work. In the area of peacekeeping, the Council urged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs to ensure that gender analysis and technical gender expertise were included throughout all stages of mission planning, mandate development, implementation, review and mission drawdown. It called on the Secretary-General to initiate, in collaboration with Member States, a revised strategy, within existing resources, to double the numbers of women in peacekeeping operations over the next five years. The Council expressed deep concern over continuing allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers and non-United Nations forces and urged police- and troop-contributing countries to provide robust predeployment training, conduct swift and thorough investigations, and if appropriate, to prosecute. In addition, it called for the greater integration by Member States and the United Nations of their agendas on women, peace and security, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism which can be conducive to terrorism. As for the Governments, the Council urged States to assess strategies and resourcing around the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.

The open debate had a record number of 110 speakers over a two-day session. Member States noted that, despite progress made since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), implementation of all its provisions still lagged. Women and children still suffered disproportionately in conflict and post-conflict countries, especially now that groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/al-Sham (ISIL/ISIS) specifically targeted women. The need to include women in all stages of peace processes, peacekeeping and peacebuilding was also

emphasized. Some of the speakers announced funding allocations and other commitments to improve women's leadership. Many decried the fact that it was still often more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in times of conflict, and that rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage associated with terrorist groups persisted.

Consideration of the draft report of the Security Council to the General Assembly

On 20 October, the Security Council unanimously adopted its annual report to the General Assembly for the period 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2015 (see S/2015/771). The President of the Council expressed his appreciation to the delegation of New Zealand, which had prepared the introduction of the draft report, as President of the Council in July, with the participation of other Council members, while thanking the Secretariat for its contribution The Permanent Representative of New Zealand stressed that, at the Council's request, his Government had taken a revised approach by providing an introduction that was half the length of recent introductions, attempting to provide a summary. He explained that the intensive process had taken place over three months. Noting ongoing efforts of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions to determine the best approach in future, he expressed appreciation for the efforts by Lithuania and the Russian Federation in that regard.

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

On 20 October, the Council held an open debate on the working methods of the Security Council under the agenda item "Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)". The Deputy Secretary-General; the President of the General Assembly, Mogens Lykketoft; and the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, Sven Jürgenson, participated as speakers in the debate.

The Deputy Secretary-General said the Secretariat had always been and would remain a vital partner of the 15-member Security Council, providing detailed and actionable information on a wide range of issues. The Department of Political Affairs briefed Security Council members every month on situations that could threaten international peace and security. Early warning signs could play an even more important role in preventing situations from deteriorating or spiralling out of control. He recalled that the Security Council's work affected all Member States in a world where peace, development and human rights were increasingly interrelated. The President of the General Assembly stressed that the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council was mutually reinforcing and complementary, recalling that some 178 Member States are not members of the Security Council. He touched upon the process of selecting the next Secretary-General, for which there had been calls for transparency and a more rigorous process for years, he said. In General Assembly resolution 69/321, he continued, Member States had requested that the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council began the process of soliciting candidates. In that regard, he announced that he had already started discussions with his counterpart in the Security Council with a view to circulating a letter inviting the membership to present candidates. Bearing in mind that there had never been a female Secretary-General, the inclusion and consideration of women candidates should be an important focus, he added. The Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council said that, according to the Charter of the United Nations, that 54-member body might furnish information to the Security Council and should provide it with

assistance upon request, but the use of that provision had been very limited. He emphasized that the time had come to revitalize the relationship between the Charter bodies of the Organization. He also stressed that the changing nature of conflict, from inter-State war to complex civil conflicts, highlighted the fundamental link between sustainable development and lasting peace, and that the Economic and Social Council could interact with the Security Council on a regular basis on issues such as the promotion of institution-building and improved governance, the need for social inclusion, the role of women and youth, and the impact of environmental degradation on weakened societies.

During the open debate, the vast majority of speakers underlined the usefulness of such annual debates and the significant interest of the membership in the working methods of the Security Council and its decision-making process. Such interest was also shown in the number of participants in the meeting (54 speakers on behalf of 162 Members States, given that the Presidency of the Council had encouraged joint statements as a way of improving efficiency). The use of the veto, respect for human rights, cooperation with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as with regional organizations and troop- and police-contributing countries, and procedures to appoint the new Secretary-General were among topics addressed by speakers.

The Presidency drafted a summary of the debate, which was distributed in January 2016 (see A/70/679-S/2016/35).

Taking into account the comments of Member States during the debate, Spain drafted a statement by the President, which was adopted on 30 October (S/PRST/2015/19). It is the first statement by the President on working methods adopted by the Security Council, underscoring the importance of increased coordination, cooperation and interaction among the principal organs of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, other relevant bodies including the Peacebuilding Commission, and regional organizations, including the African Union. The Council reaffirmed that the relationship between the principal organs of the Organization was mutually reinforcing and complementary, in accordance with and with full respect for their respective functions, authority, powers and competencies as enshrined in the Charter. It took note in that regard of the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 69/321 on 11 September 2015 and the continued cooperation between the Presidents of both organs. The Council affirmed its commitment to continue to keep its working methods under consideration in its regular work, in order to ensure their effective and consistent implementation, and recalled its commitment to making more effective use of open meetings, welcoming joint statements by both Council members and other Member States. Appreciating the work undertaken by the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, the Council requested the Group to continue reviewing and updating relevant notes by the President of the Council, in particular note S/2010/507 of 26 July 2010, including with a focus on implementation.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

On 27 October, the Permanent Representative of New Zealand, as Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and

associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, briefed the Security Council on the latest reports of the Monitoring Team of the Committee, on resolutions 2214 (2015) and 2199 (2015) (see S/2015/739 and S/2015/891).

The Chair of the Committee stressed that while some gains had been made against the two groups, a series of major challenges had hindered efforts to cut off their revenue streams. Turning first to the report on Libya (S/2015/891), presented on 12 October, he said it had found a potentially increasing threat from Al-Qaida and associated groups, including ISIL/Daesh. Libya was strategically valuable, given its proximity to Europe and to the African desert, its significant oil resources, widespread availability of arms and weak internal security. The report concluded that the Libya offshoot of ISIL was the only known affiliate obtaining support from the main group in Syria and Iraq, adding that its central command viewed Libya as an opportunity to expand its so-called caliphate. ISIL had perpetrated attacks throughout the North African country and several of the individuals involved had not yet been designated. In this regard, he mentioned that to extend the reach of sanctions, Member States must provide further listing proposals to the Committee. Cautioning Council members, he informed them that ISIL/Daesh was seen by local people as a foreign terrorist organization not embedded in their communities. To that end, he highlighted that States must exercise vigilance in relation to travel by individuals to Libya, adding that he would liaise with others on the possibility of a joint meeting to analyse any capacity gaps, including border control issues.

On the second report, presented to the Committee in August, he recalled that a summary of the assessment of measures introduced in resolution 2199 (2015) had been circulated to the Security Council on 25 September (S/2015/739). The Committee had agreed several actions based on the Team's recommendations, largely aimed at raising awareness of the threats posed by ISIL/Daesh and Al-Nusrah Front, and suggesting ways in which States and the private sector could eliminate the groups' key revenue streams from oil smuggling, the looting and trafficking of antiquities, kidnap for ransom and illicit donations. He said the Team had identified a series of major challenges that had complicated the implementation of those measures, including the difficulty of identifying the origin of seized crude oil and antiquities. It also noted that it would be premature to make a full assessment of the impact of resolution 2199 (2015) only five months after its adoption.

Describing the Committee's other efforts, the Chair said that the sanctions list had been expanded in September with the inclusion of 20 names, reflecting the growing threat posed by ISIL/Daesh and the efforts of States to propose designations, with the list containing 247 individuals and 74 entities as at the date of the briefing to the Council. Additionally, he informed the Council that the new ombudsperson for the sanctions regime had started her responsibilities in early July 2015, and there had also been changes in the Team's composition. In concluding, he mentioned that he planned to hold another open briefing, in a more interactive format, for interested Member States in November, and recalled the importance of the international community providing support to Libya and its neighbours in the struggle against Al-Qaida, ISIL/Daesh and their associates.

In consultations, Security Council members supported the recommendations contained in both reports and expressed their concern regarding the difficulties posed by Al-Qaida and related groups, particularly the presence of ISIL/Daesh in Libya, taking into account the strategic importance of the country. Member States highlighted that the formation of a Government of National Accord was essential to prevent the expansion of ISIL/Daesh in Libya.